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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3464
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 000476

DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/USSES, AF A A/S CARTER, AF/C, CA/OCS/ACS/AF
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU
CAIRO FOR DAVID POTTER AND CHRIS ROWAN

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CASC](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: ANOTHER MURKY HOSTAGE "CRISIS" UNFOLDS IN DARFUR

REF: A) KHARTOUM 371

¶1. (SBU) On the evening of April 4, 2009, 10-20 Arabic- speaking men in pick-up trucks invaded the Southwest Darfur compound of a small French NGO, Aide Medicale Internationale (AMI), and abducted two female AMI employees: a French nurse and a Canadian Administrator, and two Sudanese employees who were later released. The two abducted AMI workers have been able to contact their relatives by phone, and have said they are unharmed and in good condition. The AMI compound is located 60 miles west of Nyala near the Chadian border.

¶2. (SBU) According to the French DCM, the abductors claim to belong to an organization called "Liberation of Sudan From Foreigners." The Canadian Consul (protect) reports that the abductors have demanded a ransom of 200,000 Sudanese pounds (approximately \$87,000) for release of the aid workers, but have not made any political demands. This is the same amount rumored to have been paid to abductors by MSF-F during the March 11 kidnapping episode (Reftel A). However, MSF-F officials vehemently continue to deny having paid a ransom to the March 11 kidnappers.

¶3. (SBU) The French DCM (protect) told DCM Asquino that the Sudanese MFA has not been very helpful or cooperative since news broke of the April 4 AMI abduction. He added that the French Embassy has been assured by the MFA that the GoS will not attack the kidnappers to free the hostages (as occurred during a failed hostage rescue attempt of Chinese oil workers last year in Southern Kordofan.) At this point, the local Darfuri authorities are investigating, and the local tribal sheikhs are reportedly negotiating for the release of the hostages.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: The concocted name of the abductors, the MFA's unhelpful response, and the repeat ransom demand give this new hostage "crisis" all the trappings of another NCP stage show designed to demonstrate the dangerous environment for westerners in Darfur. Given that the GoS has made no-known efforts to prosecute the perpetrators from last month's kidnapping episode in North Darfur (reftel), the GoS may be playing a dangerous game with the lives of aid workers. The regime may or may not be complicit in these incidents. What is clear, though, is that state-controlled media continue to vilify and denounce western aid workers. As a result, the regime is guilty at a minimum of creating an environment in which armed thugs may believe they not only can get away with such crimes, but also can get credit for such "patriotic acts." Moreover, it should be noted that the area where the kidnapping occurred is frequented by pro-regime Arab militias and sometimes by pro-regime Chadian rebels. Post will provide additional information as it becomes available. END COMMENT.

FERNANDEZ